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FIRST CRUISE OF THE "MONITOR"
PASSAIC

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passaic

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THE PASSAIC AT SEA.

THE FIRST CRUISE OF THE "MONITOR" PASSAIC.

ALTHOUGH the vivid excitement following the first conflict between iron-clad ships has subsided, and fears and anticipations have alike been cooled by farther experience, the results attained by the iron-mail innovation in naval architecture have been of too grave importance to allow public interest to die.

We could not but expect that the powers of the first Monitor should be magnified to the utmost, after its eventful trial in Hampton Roads, since in every case where a great and startling novelty meets triumphant success at the outset the hopes of some and the fears of others are sure to exaggerate its importance. Had the first attack upon Charleston been viewed without this magnified expectancy, there would have been far less disappointment at the result. In judging of powers of defense we overrated those of offense, and so fell into error; yet of one thing we may be convinced, that ships of the Monitor

class approach nearer invulnerability than any yet designed. Of their sea-going qualities the following account of a complete cruise may furnish some idea—the ship having weathered the gale in which the original Monitor was lost. The story has been transcribed in its original form as written on shipboard, leaving out merely such items as could be of benefit to the enemy. First, however, it should be remembered that the Passaic (the second of her class afloat) differs from her predecessor in being larger, more commodious, more heavily plated, and in having one gun of heavier calibre.

We sailed from New York Wednesday, November 26, 1862, bound for Fortress Monroe. The weather was beautiful; but we saw the night settle down with some misgivings, for we were trying a dangerous experiment. Only once before had a vessel like ourselves attempted it, and her narrow escape was too fresh in our memories.

However, we were in tow of a side-wheel steamer, and the sloop-of-war *Dacotah* was our convoy. Toward morning the wind arose, the waves increased, and our hatches not being very securely fastened, and far from tight, leaked in constant streams; day broke and passed, yet still the wind increased. Every wave broke over our low decks, and, like a huge sea-monster, the ship plunged through them, dripping and leaking in a manner unpleasantly suggestive. So long as the engines worked we had little fear, though all on board were novices at such navigation: indeed we were becoming used to our strange craft when whir-r-r went the wheel and round we came to the wind—the steering apparatus had given way. A dozen men were quickly on deck, and a temporary apparatus rigged as soon as possible. The permanent steering gear was beneath decks, for protection in battle, though the prolongation of the rudder-head upward through the armor had been designed as an attachment for a lever in an emergency. By means of this lever and ropes carried into the turret through the port-stoppers the new arrangement was made. The break was soon repaired, though three times that day it broke again.

On the evening of Friday we had plunged and plowed along as far as a night's voyage from the Fortress when we were suddenly startled by a dull report, a shout, and then a rush of men from the engine-room, accompanied by a hissing cloud of steam and smoke. "The ship's on fire!" was first the alarming cry, followed by the "All hands to quarters!" "Train along the

hose!" the hurry of many feet, the groans of the scalded, and the cries of the terrified struggling to get up the ladder to the deck. For a moment there was confusion, then a lull and again the cry, "The boilers have burst!" With alacrity the men sprang to the hatches of the fire-room. Swifter than it can be told they tore them off, and one after another was taken out almost stifled, wet, breathless, and exhausted. Fortunately none were found seriously injured, and though we could not, of course, determine at once the nature of our disaster, we hoped it might prove slight. The scalded were immediately cared for, and as our pumps were stopped we became settled in the conviction that only a lull in wind and wave could prevent our going down. Providentially this occurred, and towed, like a log, we entered that night the harbor of Hampton Roads.

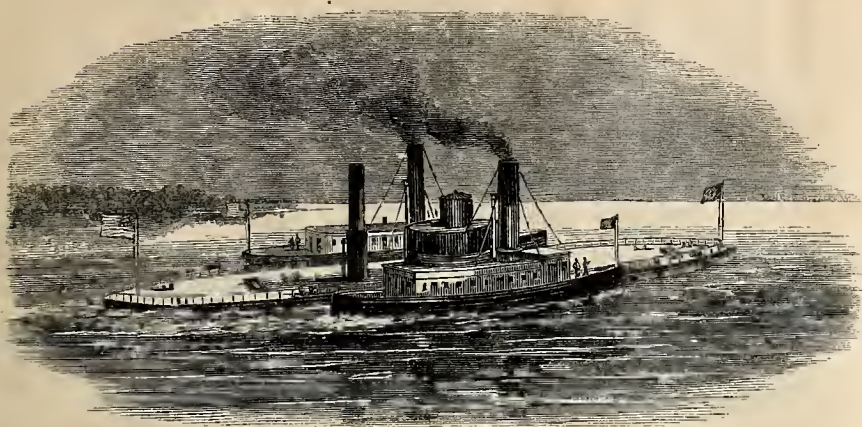
What a change for us! We had anticipated a triumphant entry, and to have been greeted by cheers from the crowded transports that we supposed were waiting our conveyance southward; but instead of that not even a whistle was blown, or a single evidence of satisfaction shown by any.

We had been at Fortress Monroe but twelve hours when the blue flag of the Admiral was seen coming in, and immediately on his arrival the Captain reported the accident. A short interview resulted in our proceeding as soon as possible to Washington for repairs.

Two steam tugs were sent to us, and early Sunday morning, November 30, 1862 we started



THE SHIP'S ON FIRE!



IN TOW.

for Washington. The tugs took up position on either side; for it was found that in any other position we were continually yawing in different directions, the bulky iron mass refusing to obey her helm while the propeller was not in motion. It was deemed advisable to keep the news of the accident from the public, and accordingly, much to the chagrin of numerous reporters, the Navy-yard was closed to visitors, and silence enjoined upon officers and crew. This was fortunate, since we could not but feel some mortification at returning for repairs so soon after our promising departure from New York. The amount of injury was quickly ascertained, upon arrival at Washington, to be the breaking of numerous iron-stays which, joining the tube sheet of a square boiler to its roof, are intended to aid in resisting the upward pressure. Upon the breaking of these stays the roofs of both boilers had been forced up against the deck timbers, whose immense strength alone, bound down as they were by the mailed decks, saved us from destruction. Workmen were immediately employed, and day and night the ship resounded with the ring of hammer and anvil. All day that incessant ring and the muffled sound of voices came from the huge boilers, until one Monday morning, just twelve days after our arrival, the work was pronounced complete. Then came preparations for a new departure, but various changes and improvements about the ship consumed the time, and not until Christmas did we again steam southward. Though hopeful, and confident of success in our undertaking, we saw the city recede from view with some regret, and a half fear that we were destined to be unfortunate. How far our anticipations were realized, the experience of a single week was destined to show. We sailed alone; no convoy this time was with us; and on Saturday arrived at Fortress Monroe. Before leaving Washington news had arrived of the sailing of the Montauk (a sister ship) from New York, for the same port, and we anticipated finding her already arrived. To

our surprise she was not, though overdue. The Monitor lay there, however, painted a sombre black, and looking almost like our own reflection in the water. How little did we think her career was so nearly run! All night our fears were great for the Montauk's safety; she was two or three days over time, and the weather had been far from good; a heavy fog settled, so dense as to hide objects completely at half the ship's length. All day, and again all night, we looked in vain seaward, until, as morning dawned, our worst fears seemed realized, for within sight was the Connecticut, the iron-clad's convoy, alone. The truth was but too apparent



"MONTAUK'S COMING IN, SIR."



NARROW ESCAPE.

—she was lost. We looked at each other in silence and dismay. No one then can imagine our feelings when the Quarter-master on watch announced, "The Montauk's coming in, Sir!" Surely she was, and steaming along finely alone. We could not but feel sincerely thankful, from a kind of sympathy as if of relationship, not dreaming that so soon we should be in greater need of it.

At noon on Monday, the 29th of December, 1862, we weighed anchor and stood out to sea. The *State of Georgia*, a large side-wheel steamer, was to convoy us. She was lying in wait about twelve miles down the bay, to give us a fair opportunity to show our sailing qualities to an English man-of-war that had apparently entered port to watch us. We did very well alone, for the water lay as quiet as a mill-pond. When we neared our convoy she was under way, moving very slowly. A man stood on the starboard quarter with a line to throw on our deck, to take us in tow. There was still too great a distance between us to enable him to reach, and we started a little ahead. The steamer also started, just at that moment attempting to run across our bow. It was a dangerous experiment, and nearly a fatal one to her. We neared rapidly; every one started forward to see the collision. She rang her engine-bell furiously and dashed ahead—hardly in time, for we struck her rudder, forcing it over to port, and hurling her pilot to the deck by the sudden revolution of her wheel. Fortunately only her chains were broken and the pilot but slightly injured. A boat was low-

ered and the damage quickly repaired. Again we started, the wind blowing from the south and promising rain. Before losing sight of Cape Henry Light-house the *Monitor* was made out just on the horizon, following us in tow of the steamer *Rhode Island*, and out toward sea the English man-of-war.

About sunset the wind freshened somewhat, and the swell of the sea increased. We rolled a little, but not very disagreeably; none but the ward-room boys were sea-sick, and only one particularly so—that was our latest importation, and we had named him *Cupid*. He was first noticed as appearing a little melancholy, according to the usual style; then, as the rolling motion increased, becoming solemn, rapidly verging on the comical, and finally sinking to repose with his head gracefully reclined over a spittoon.

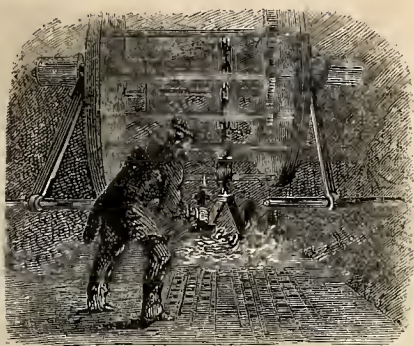
About one o'clock a leak was discovered near the turret in the boat-davit socket, and another in the socket of the turret itself. This latter had arisen from oversight in neglecting to lower the turret. This could be accomplished by driving out a huge key at the base of the shaft, thereby allowing the whole mass to sink about an eighth of an inch. There was no alternative but to do this at once. Now to drive it in was not a difficult matter, for a battering-ram had been provided for the purpose, and swinging room was allowed through the entrance-way to the turret-chamber; but to drive it out was another matter. There was no room to swing the ram, and the pressure of one hundred and sixty tons would hardly allow the turret to move easi-

ly. For several hours every effort was made with sledges and screw braces to start that key, but with only partial success; meantime the waves rose higher, the wind freshened, and as the water poured over our decks in larger volumes, the stream grew to fearful size.

By noon the next day we were off Cape Hatteras, the wind all the time increasing and still ahead. Signals were made to the State of Georgia to head more inshore. Toward dusk a steamer passed us with a clipper ship in tow loaded with troops, and the Monitor was made out far ahead.

We were a little mortified to think she had so far beaten us, and every thing but blessed the pilot of the Georgia, who was again heading out to sea. Once more signals were made as before, and at the same moment a leak was discovered in our bows, apparently from the straining of the projecting part. A stream was poured in like a miniature cataract, but with the velocity of that of a steam-engine, and threatening to give serious trouble.

About seven in the evening another leak was found in the after-part of the ship, that in the turret increasing, and both our main pumps (two Worthington's) just given out. Signal-lights were burned, ordering the State of Georgia to turn back again for the nearest lee. Before midnight the gale blew so fearfully that we began really to fear for our safety; and especially when the wind was found to be changing and blowing again ahead. The leak gained rapidly, and we began to despair of ever seeing



THE LEAK.

port. All hands were ordered to take out ballast, to lighten ship. It was done in vain. Shot were then ordered up to be thrown overboard—four hundred were thrown over without lessening or retarding the leak. Another pump gave out, and our last resort, the pumps known as the bilge-injections, were the only ones at work. Coston's signal-lights were burned, and a rocket sent up, indicating our distress, and informing the State of Georgia that we were sinking.

While the lights were burning a steamer was discovered through the darkness, on the port bow also burning signals. All this time we were rolling fearfully. At intervals the gale would burst with redoubled fury, and we would



BAILING ALL NIGHT.



MEN EXHAUSTED.

rise high on a monstrous wave, and then plunge down completely out of sight of our convoy, or come crashing down on the succeeding wave, with a shock that made the ship tremble like an aspen. By one o'clock the water had gained so fast that all hands were turned to bailing, passing the water in buckets up through the turret to be thrown over.

Officers and men toiled at the work with an energy that could be stimulated only by desperation. Huge masses of water rolled over our decks, while over the turret the wave, sometimes in solid mass, would sweep like a tornado. Wet through, faint, cold, and despairing, we bailed and bailed, hoping beyond hope. Our boats were useless, and those of the Georgia could never have lived an instant. Still we worked on, stimulating each other to renewed activity, some shouting, some singing with forced gayety, and some working with the languid air of complete exhaustion. For three long hours not one complained, but then there came the depressing news, "The water is gaining, and within three inches of the fires;" and swift on that, "Our last pumps are gone!"

The water swashed and hissed over the glowing grates as the ship rolled heavily, and every one stopped in his work in utter despair. For an hour firemen and engineers had waded about the engine and fire rooms knee-deep in water, and now the subordinates utterly refused to do any more. The scene beggars description. Some sat down and looked at the rising water with desperate eagerness; some prayed and cried; and some rushed to the turret to be, if possible, the last to go down, or to see the open night once more. Still there was no confusion. Officers drove the men back to their posts, though most of them, paralyzed only for an instant, were again at work.

Most providentially the pumps again began; the few moments they had been stopped seemed hours to us, but now hope returned. Meantime the ship had been put head on to the shore,

to reach it, if possible, and beach her. Hope vain enough, for we were forty miles away! yet we thought that nearer in our chance of escape would be increased, and our anchor could at least reach to bring us round to the sea. The change had saved us, the leak decreased as the waves no longer raised us up to be plunged forward, but rolled us from side to side.

Once more all hands were turned to bailing, and we rapidly gained on the leak. So we worked till morning. The wind went down, and with thankful hearts we blessed the Providence that had preserved us. The men fell exhausted, many of them where they had worked, and slept on the cold, wet decks.

Just before the storm the Georgia signaled that a man was dead on board, and asked permission to stop and bury him. It was granted, in so far as that we moved more slowly. The flag was lowered to half-mast, a short service was read, the plank on which he lay was raised, and he slid into the sea. A melancholy burial! He had been well that day at noon; at night he lay twenty fathoms beneath the waters.

Morning came, but our troubles were not yet over; all day we kept our course, and at night, northeast of Cape Lookout, the wind again increased. The gale returned from a different quarter, and our leak once more became troublesome. Most fortunately this time our two last pumps worked well. Still the leak gained slightly, and we feared the starting of some new one. Even now so desperate was our condition that a bottle, containing a short account of our prospects and the state of affairs, was sealed up, a red flag attached, and the whole trusted to the mercy of the waves, in the hope that if the worst of our fears were realized some one would find it, and from that account learn how we had gone.

The pumps worked on, and gradually the hope of safety gave way to reality. Morning dawned. That night we made Beaufort harbor,



OFF HATTERAS.

North Carolina; a pilot came aboard and we steamed in.

The very first news we received fell like a weight upon our hearts. "The Monitor is gone and all on board!" "She was lost that Tuesday night off Hatteras."

We could not believe it. After our arrival an officer of the Columbia came on board and confirmed the news in part. It was the Columbia we had seen making signals on our port-bow. Two hours after that she fell in with the Rhode Island cruising alone. She boarded her, and found the captain and the rescued officers and crew of the Monitor on board. She had gone down indeed, but with only a part, not all her living freight. The story must be only too fresh in the memory of all to bear repetition. The Columbia reported us as signaling in distress and sinking, but was unable to render us assistance. They had seen our convoy afterward alone, and of course concluded we too were gone. When we heard this our fears for the effect upon our friends were very great. The Columbia stated that the Rhode Island had returned to Fortress Monroe to report to Admiral Lee. Our convoy was to return immediately to the Fortress, and we eagerly availed ourselves of the opportunity to write and send to the telegraph-station at that point news of our safety to those at home. At night the Captain of the State of Georgia came on board, stating that all that Tuesday night not a man lay down, but every one stood at his post ready to lower the boats, though few had hopes

of saving a single man. Several times tears came to the eyes of the rough sailors as we plunged out of sight, and they thought all was over.

The Georgia sailed that night. What was our surprise on Friday to see the Rhode Island come into Beaufort, she having been straight on to Wilmington instead of returning, leaving the Columbia to cruise around to pick up any of ours or the Monitor's crew. The Captains of the Rhode Island and Monitor came on board very much surprised to find us safe and sound in harbor.

Following such scenes of excitement came various surmisings as to the effect of the news on the Northern public—the arrival of the Montauk after a safe and comfortable voyage—her running ashore on the bar outside, and the anxiety connected with such an accident, and, last of all, but most important to us, the arrival of the mail.

Gradually came on the usual monotony of ship life, with the necessity for some sort of amusement or variety. The town so near us offered some chance of the latter, and to it there was always opportunity to resort. A few words will describe the town better than a volume. One church, a hundred or more low, awkward houses built on one street with a few alleys leading thereto, an empty market—sand half-way to the knees every where, and a community of the most assorted character. The few houses that had once been tenable, and perhaps elegant, have long stood stripped and desolate. Hundreds of

negroes lounge about the streets, too idle to shoot the game that comes within a stone's-throw of the land, and too independent to hire themselves for any sort of labor.

Transports of every variety were constantly arriving with troops, and it was whispered that Wilmington, North Carolina, was to be the place of attack. The talk of the "expedition" was in every body's mouth, while the most dubious uncertainty of course prevailed. That we were destined for that point at first we were afterward convinced; why that destination was changed it would be of no consequence now to learn. But changed it was, and ere ten days were passed we were getting ready again for sea. With the loss of the Monitor and our own narrow escape still fresh in mind, the anticipation of another sea-voyage was any thing but exhilarating.

We sailed; but before we were fairly out of the harbor round vent the wind to the eastward, then to the southward, indicating bad weather, and we let go anchor just off Fort Macon. This fort commands the entrance to the harbor, and is the place where Burnside made his successful attack in the early part of the war. It is an earth-work mounting several rifled guns, and appearing like an inverted tea-saucer of monstrous size set upon another still larger. The guns are all *en barbette*. As the market seemed most wretchedly supplied, and wild game plenty, several of the officers made excursions to supply deficiencies. The first was for clams and oysters, and successful, as the shore is thoroughly covered with the bivalves, but the second was up to Bogue Sound, a few miles from the ship,

for game, and was not successful; yet all the afternoon we pulled from one shoal to another, or waded nearly waist-deep around the shores in our endeavors to get within range of the innumerable flocks of ducks. The boat was heavy, and the oars made such a splashing that we found it utterly useless. After all our trouble, just as the sun was setting, we found ourselves aground on a sand-bar and ignorant of the channel. We tried rowing, then pushing; then, as a last alternative, jumped overboard, and all hands tugged along to deep water. Every few minutes we had to repeat it, and not till some time after dark did we reach the ship, cold, wet, and hungry.

In such ways we passed the time until Saturday, when, the weather being good, we started once more southward, this time in tow of the Rhode Island. The crew were not a little gloomy and somewhat superstitious about "the ship that lost the Monitor;" for having so narrowly escaped before, fate seemed to be against us, and the fact that the paymaster was at this time ordered to transfer his papers and money to the Rhode Island, certainly did not tend to increase their confidence. The morning of departure had brought a change of wind after a storm of 28 hours, and we hoped for a good run down the coast. The Montauk started with us, and in the delightful serenity of mind occasioned by our seeming ill-luck we were obliged to stop for some difficulty in attachment of our hawsers and see her pass us. So long did our convoy stop, even anchoring, that we inwardly wished her at the bottom. To make delay still longer a man must needs drop overboard from her, and



INHABITANTS OF BEAUFORT.

splash about and create confusion on the ship till he could be picked up, which was safely done after he had become pretty thoroughly exhausted.

The sun was just disappearing when the steady beat of the propeller announced the delay over, and straight out toward the long shoals that make off Cape Fear, called the Frying-pan, we turned our course. The breeze, so light in the evening, slowly increased until, with our usual luck, it became a gale. As it only helped us onward, however, we did not complain, and went to sleep with a good deal of confidence. All night the heavy ship bowled along before the storm, her engines working well, and the leaks not troublesome, save from the rushing and unpleasantly-suggestive splash of the water. On Sunday, about four o'clock, we concluded that we must be about off Charleston, South

Carolina. The Rhode Island rolled and plunged about in the heavy sea, sometimes being hidden to the tops of her paddle-boxes, then rising and careening till we could almost see her keel. For us it was any thing but pleasant, as one may imagine, the water rushing incessantly over our decks, five or six feet in solid mass, and dashing the spray high over our turret. All were anxious, and neither officers nor men undressed to sleep, but watched the prospect from the turret. "At noon on Monday the wind changed, and a heavy fog obscured every thing of sea and sky to within a ship's-length. We could hardly see even our consort. Signals were made from her to tell us we were within twenty-eight miles of the light-ship off Port Royal, when suddenly it loomed up right ahead of us, and "Breakers on the starboard bow!" told us pretty plainly that we had lost our reckoning.

It began to rain, and the storm changed suddenly to the southeast. The Rhode Island fired a gun, and let go both bower anchors, with the effect of bringing us head on to a tremendous sea. We rose and fell with startling violence, fearing every moment we should lose our pro-



TOWING ROUND FRYING-PAN SHOALS.

jecting bow or spring a new leak, the result of which we knew full well. The necessity for running before the sea became most apparent, for the waves were absolutely mountainous. To give some idea of their violence: a heavy iron plate, weighing 1500 pounds, used as a cover for the anchor-well, but at sea lashed to the deck, was torn from its fastenings, lifted half the height of the turret, and dashed down with terrific violence. The ship could not have lived through it an hour. We were obliged, so very thick it was, by the time the Rhode Island's anchors were up, to run before the gale out to sea. Hour after hour, for miles, we were hurled along, growing less and less hopeful, and ignorant of our whereabouts. About 7 A.M. the following morning a buoy was made out, supposed to be off Tybee Island. Still running on, we must have been about off St. Catherine's Island, when the gale lulled a few minutes, and changed to another quarter, this time blowing directly on toward land. The resort of running still before it was not to be thought of, and our critical condition became apparent. No one had a hope in the course to which necessity compelled us—a run, head on, or nearly so, to the sea.



LIGHT-SHIP OFF PORT ROYAL HARBOR.

How that day and night passed it would be hard to tell. Once we nearly ran on the shoals, but where, no one knew; and on Wednesday morning, for the first time, the sun came out. Observation at noon made us out just 30 miles north of Port Royal, 30 miles from land, and about off Charleston. Steering now for Port Royal, we made it about 4 P.M., and ran in through the long, narrow channel to Hilton Head, where we anchored just after dark. The pleasure of such voyaging as we had experienced was not much enhanced by the impossibility of getting cooked or warm food, the water, a great part of the time, putting out the galley fire, or the intense heat continually driving out the cooks from their narrow den. Yet, with all the disagreeable, there was still much that was sublime: the majesty of the waves, as we looked at them from their bases—the peculiarity of our situation on an iron ship, always under water, yet still floating, and seeming to battle for its existence with the waves—the fountain-like burst of water through the anchor-well, rising sometimes to a height of twenty feet—and the storms that seemed, in their fury and incessancy, bent on our destruction.

In the harbor of Port Royal we found the Montauk and Ironsides (the former having arrived several days before us), and quite a fleet of men-of-war at anchor in their vicinity. Our anchorage was in the neighborhood of the machine-shop. This shop is not on shore, but in the creek above Bay Point, and is merely a most convenient wooden shed, erected over a couple of New Bedford whalers. In this establishment are a foundry, a blacksmith-shop, a carpenter-shop, and a machine-shop. In the repair of the iron-clad fleet especially this shop afterward proved of immense service.

No opportunity presented of going ashore at Hilton Head, as we sailed upon sudden orders, after this wise: The Montauk had been sent two days before to take a fort on the Ogeechee River, behind which the Nashville was reported to have taken refuge. She did not succeed, and, as we supposed, we were to go

down immediately to her assistance. The order came on Monday, January 26, in the afternoon; by night all was ready; and the following morning was to see us off. Morning came, and the next, and the next, yet still we lay at Port Royal, the wind and waves seeming to vie with each other in their opposition.

Verification of the former report from the Montauk came on Thursday, with particulars of the engagement. She had seen the Nashville; had gone within fifteen hundred yards of the battery, and came upon obstructions—piles driven across channel, and torpedoes. She was obliged to anchor and open fire at that distance. The result was merely to dismount one or two guns, use all her shell, do no particular damage to the battery (which was an earth-work), and haul off to wait for some assistance. She was hit thirteen times, but not at all injured. Meantime we were at Port Royal, having first a day of fog and storm, and then a day of most severe blows from every quarter of the compass. Friday morning came—still blew the wind, and angrily dashed the waves. No calm, no news, no letters. On Saturday, however, the weather proved beautiful, and the steamer James Adger, the former con-



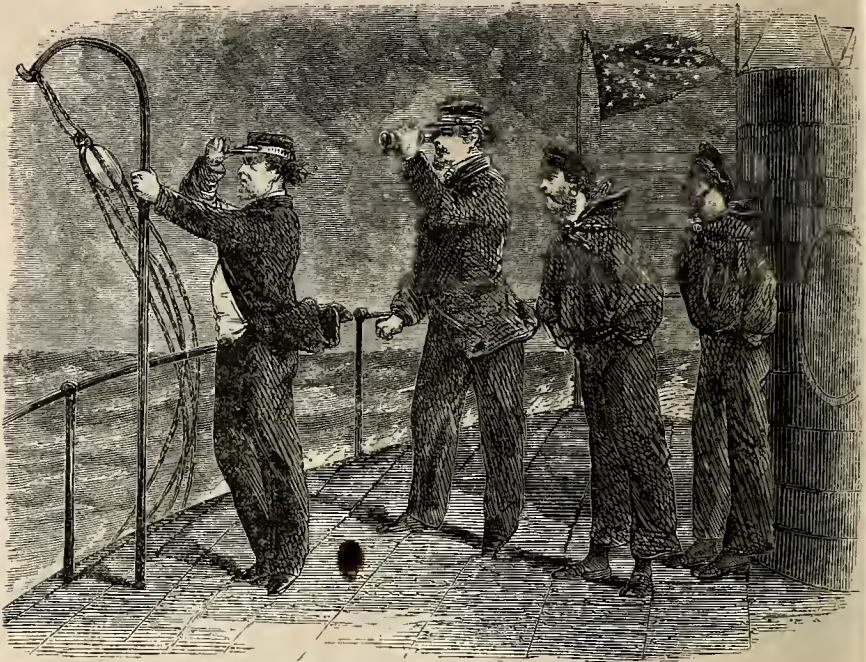
HEAD ON TO SEA IN A FOG.

sort of the Montauk, awaited us at the entrance of the barbor.

We certainly did seem designed for working mischief to every body; for the tide drifting the Adger toward us almost imperceptibly, and we coming up with a very little too much headway, we must need run crash into her, breaking a hole into the stern under the quarter, and only by dint of much yelling "Back her! back her!" "Go ahead there, go ahead!" "We shall sink you!" etc., did we avoid running clear through. Our flag-staff was carried away; but having been designed expressly for running into vessels, there was small concern for damage to our craft. Ladders were lowered and the condition of the opening examined, with the result of risking any leakage, and keeping right on to our destination. The sea continued smooth as a mirror, and at noon, to the surprise of all but the commanding officers, we entered Warsaw Sound, instead of Ossibaw, to join the Montauk.

Two gun-boats, the Marblehead and Conne-maugh, were lying there at anchor, and it was not long ere the news of the iron-clad rebel ram Fingal being down from Savannah as far as

Thunder-bolt Battery (rebel), in the Wilmington River, was received as a reason for our visit. The information was brought by deserters, who stated that she was to run down to liberate the Nashville. Now there were but two ways for this to be accomplished; one, through a narrow shallow creek called the Burnside River, never deep enough except at unusual spring tides, and the other down Warsaw Sound, and by way of the sea. There is, however, a channel called "The Way of the Romney Marshes," much shorter (but only available for craft drawing eight or nine feet), opening into the sound within sight of our anchorage. Reliable information also had been received that two steamers, loaded with cotton, were above in the Wilmington River (which leads to Savannah), and intended running the blockade. Meantime an almost incessant firing was kept up by the Montauk, about twelve miles below, at the fort beforementioned. The captain was strongly inclined to go down to assist; but finally, knowing that we could not arrive before night, gave it up, cleared the ship for action, took on board a Savannah pilot, and we headed up the Wilmington River toward Savan-



QUITE A BLOW.

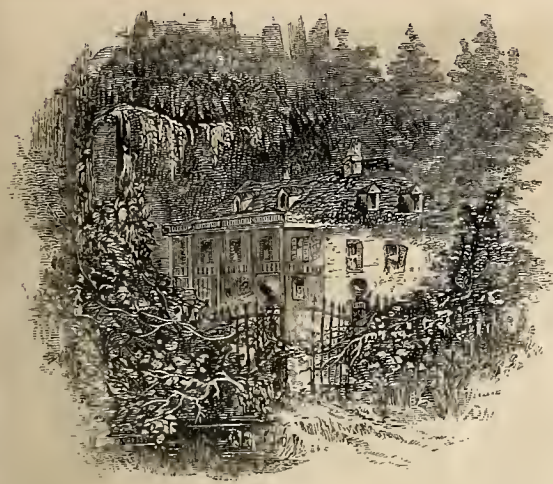
nah. Anticipations of a great battle and an easy victory were not the least ingredients in the emotions of those few hours. The Marblehead accompanied us, and together our strength seemed by no means despicable against *any* force.

At 12 o'clock all hands were called to quarters opposite a deserted fort called the Redhouse Battery, and some evidence of rebels being seen the Marblehead opened fire among the bushes, eliciting no reply. By half past two we came within sight of Savannah, and within range of "Thunder-holt," and anchored. The fort, guns, and men were plainly visible, but no guns were fired. Two or three regiments of men were drawn up, and a steamer could be seen getting under way directly abreast the fort. She was low in the water and black, but it was impossible to judge of her size or strength. Not a gun was fired, and in silence we looked at each other, then turned and steamed down, the rebels giving three cheers as we departed. Only a reconnoissance after all. All the way down the river the shore was lined with most beautiful evergreens, and here and there luxuriant growths of fruit-trees and plantations of richest beauty; but every house was tenantless, and many falling to ruin. Over every thing the blight of war seemed to hang like a shadow; and though all was as bright in Nature as in a Northern summer, there was a melancholy sense of desolation in it most saddening.

The men were disappointed at the result of

the reconnoissance, and especially so since all day the guns of the Montank could be heard at intervals in her initiatory battle. Disappointment gave place to anxiety as to *her* success, and it was decided to send a boat with an armed crew down by way of the Romney Marshes. Before it started, however, a steamer of light draught was seen coming through, and we waited in great impatience her arrival. Several army officers were on board, and a huge negro was perched on the bows by way of figure-head. The news was not encouraging certainly. "Did she take the fort?" "No!" She was engaged for five hours and a half, and then obliged to retire with forty-six wounds, a smoke-stack completely riddled, bolts driven through the pilot-house into the chamber, and various injuries of a less serious character, though none were of material importance. No one was killed or wounded on board. This certainly was not good news; yet we were destined to hear worse by the same steamer on her return from Port Royal on the following evening.

We determined on Monday to try our luck at hunting again. At about 10 o'clock we procured a boat, and arming with revolvers as well as rifles lest we should meet an enemy, we pushed off for shore. Our sport was not destined to be very great; for the steamer from Port Royal might arrive at any moment, and we have to return suddenly to the ship, or the Fingal might appear, and we have suddenly to appear on board for battle. The shore was lined with oysters,



TENANTLESS.

and the men went at once to collecting them while we struck out for game. The first unfortunate animal which appeared was a racoon, and I blazed away at him with only the effect of increasing his speed and losing him in the tall grass. In vain was search made for him to prove that at least the bullet had wounded him; and just as I had given it up the men came across and dispatched him with boat-hooks, lugging him off in triumph. Our party consisted, as at Bogue Sound, of four officers and a crew of seven men. With differences of taste, varied the amusement for all but two, a friend and myself preferred no higher game than oysters. We aspired to duck, and accordingly struck off into the woods. Not a duck was to be seen, and coming out of the thicket upon the shore I was sitting down to wait for the passing of our boat while my companion walked off in search of it. A few minutes had passed only when, rising to look about, I was startled by the sharp hiss of a bullet, the report of a rifle, and the thug of the ugly messenger as it struck into a tree against which I had been leaning. No rebel was in sight; but it was plainly time to move, as, whoever he was, he had the advantage of concealment. Just at this moment though the boat came in sight, and now for the first time the unpleasantness of my situation became apparent; for the receding tide had left the flats so slightly covered with water that, although enough was left to deceive one, it was impossible to get the boat within a quarter of a mile of the shore. The night was coming on, and the vicinity of my unseen friend of the rifle made a stay till morning not at all tempting.

The flats were rapidly bared, and the soft black mud offered no prospect of a safe journey across. However, there was no other way. I tried to wade, and sank at the first step above the knee; at the second deeper still. It was useless to proceed; yet it must be done: so finding

a box among the drift-wood, I started once more with it in hand to keep me up. After laborious and painful work I had gotten about fifty yards from shore, when I had to give it up. Deeper and deeper I sank in the black oozy mud. Had the gun I carried been my own I should have thrown it away; but I clung to it, and the box really proved my safeguard. I was sinking rapidly nearly to my waist, and thoroughly exhausted. By strenuous exertion I got partly up and sat on the box to rest. How I got back I can not remember, but back I did get at last and threw myself on the sand. There was only one chance of avoiding a stay till midnight at least, and that was to trudge over about three

miles of marsh to where my companion had gotten aboard. After my hard wading it was a terrible task. The boat met me there, and we returned to the ship satisfied with hunting.

That night the steamer returned bringing news of the raid of the rebel rams at Charleston, the account of which is now so well remembered. It was most discouraging.

For several days we lay at anchor in Warsaw Sound always ready for the Fingal. Hatchets all down at sunset, and the ship ready for action at a moment's warning. The rattle was laid at hand on the top of the turret, and a box of hand-grenades exposed in their case ready to be seized at a word. On the 4th of February she was made out coming down, accompanied by a smaller steamer; yet we were again disappointed. They took a good view of us as we had of them and retired.

Every body relapsed into the old monotonous routine of blockade life, unbroken for days and weeks together. There was, however, one thing which did and always will excite commotion, and that is the arrival of the mail. Through many and many a weary hour we would look with hope toward the sea for the expected steamer, and find only the same panorama of jutting point, of breaking wave, of long lines of mist, and the wide ocean. But when at last it would come every one was awake, and the anticipation of a letter from home would make ample amends for waiting. Only those who have experienced it can have any idea of the pain that failure to receive a letter under such circumstances will cause. We learn to make it a sort of landmark—a goal that will well repay the reaching. Hopes and expectations of happiness find a sort of climax in the mail. Even the routine of ship-duties, which alone formerly varied the monotony of life, would, after a mail, become themselves monotonous. The boatswain called in the same hoarse voice for the relieving watch



ARRIVAL OF THE MAIL.

(for half the crew were constantly at their posts, to guard against sudden attack by boarding); and the whistle for side-boys to receive a visitor was replaced only by the dull roar of some distant gun, reminding us that visitors could not disturb us there.

Game seemed to be abundant, but various captures by the rebels of officers on hunting expeditions rendered extreme caution necessary, and but few wild hogs or ducks found their way to our unfortunate table. Unfortunate, indeed, for a dearth of edibles was gradually coming on, and salt-horse and beans were being metamorphosed into luxuries. In vain were longing glances cast seaward. No steamer was in sight. There was no flour, no butter, no sugar, no potatoes in mere hope, and—but enough to say no one anticipated danger from gout or dyspepsia.

Something more than pleasure suggested a hunt, and several of the officers set off accordingly. Some idea of the character of the forests thereabout may be gathered from my share of that expedition. Not caring to hunt, I was tempted by the cool shade to saunter along at first; then to penetrate the thickets; then, before I was aware of it, to wade through marshes or crawl through underbrush, to find what was evidently lost—my way. At length, hearing a slight tapping not far off, and not caring longer for direction, I set off to follow the sound. The farther I advanced the less distinct became the sound, till suddenly directly before me appeared a monstrous snake dangling across a low crotched tree, lazily swinging back and forth in the sun. He did not see me evidently, for

he took no notice, and a respectable distance was soon put between us. He was a most villainous-looking creature, and not by any means a desirable acquaintance. The afternoon's hunt resulted in the death of one duck and a wild boar, the toughness of whose flesh suggested the probability of his having been almost ready to die of old age.

On the 24th of February a schooner was discovered ashore a mile or so away, which proved to be a prize loaded with cotton and jewelry, and valued at about \$30,000. This poor little craft was the only prize of the cruise. During our stay at this place various contrabands came down the river at night, some of them bringing useful information. They were sent immediately to Port Royal.

On the evening of the last of February we made a sail off the bar, which proved to be the steamer Locust Point, with dispatches. Her captain only knew that some movement or other was on foot, and that several iron-clads had already sailed from Port Royal. All was soon excitement and bustle, and as soon as tide would permit going over the bar we were off in tow of the Locust Point, and moving southward.

As the sun was setting we entered Ossibaw Sound, and found a powerful fleet already arrived. There were three Monitor iron-clads and four or five gun-boats, besides three mortar-schooners. The news was, however, startling. The Montauk had succeeded in destroying the Nashville, as well as having tested a torpedo in the river. The story of her running up in the early morning under the fire of the fort; of find-



LOST IN A SWAMP.

ing the Nashville ashore, and there setting her on fire with shell, is already familiar. The splendid ship that had defied all competitors in point of speed, with 500 bales of cotton, and loaded with contraband articles of all kinds, was burned to the water's-edge. The fragments of half-burned cotton were for days seen floating down the river. The torpedo, as is well known, exploded under the starboard boiler, starting a serious leak, and necessitating running the ship on the shoals. She was consequently unable to take part in the attack meditated by the fleet.

A whole day was spent in stripping the ships for action, and the following morning saw us within sight of the enemy's guns, and within range again almost of the ruins of the Nashville. All night boats had been out dragging for torpedoes; and many were the expressions of hope or uncertainty as to our experiences of the eventful morrow.

With the earliest break of day all hands were roused and made ready for action. At 8 o'clock we swung to the flood, hoisted anchor, and started. The fort to be attacked was M^cAllister. Only the iron-clads were to engage, while the others were to lie anchored about a mile below. Slowly we proceeded in Indian file till, at nine o'clock and twenty minutes, the first shot passed over us; then another, and another. Our 15-inch gun responded with a shell that went plump into an embrasure. The enemy soon proved themselves no mean marksmen, for every shot (and they came rapidly) struck or fell near us, now shaking the ship from stem to stern, now cutting into our decks, but never doing us any serious damage. Our fire was kept up with gratifying success; the turret moving with wonderful precision, and every shot and shell telling on the casemates of the battery. For an hour or two the work went on merrily, the firing grew more careful and effective on both sides, and the excitement less intense as the peculiar feeling of security in our iron armor became more confirmed. No correctness of description can approach the reality of such an engagement. The

heavy crash of shot against the sides, the scream of passing shell, or the thunder of their explosion overhead; the quiver of the whole ship, and the jingling of lamps and crockery at the fire of our own monstrous gun; the suffocating smoke from the turret, and the novelty of our situation, combined to render the whole affair one of intense interest.

After an hour or two several men were noticed skulking in the long meadow grass on the shore of the river near which we were anchored, evidently watching the movement of the turret, and firing at intervals at the ports and sight-holes in the pilot-house. Our pilot, a refugee from Savannah, sent down for a rifle. As it went up the chances of one of these men went down, for he was known as an unerring shot. A white face peered above the rushes; there was a flash and a sharp report, and it disappeared. The pleasant amusement of his companions was therefore varied by carrying off his dead body, and they troubled us no more. All day the fight lasted, but as yet the red white and red badge of rebellion floated from the fort. The change of tide and swinging of the ships obliged all to retire toward evening to our old anchorage below.

At evening a summary was taken of injuries. We had been hit about forty times; one boat smashed, the flag riddled, the pennant-staff shot away, our whistle also, several ragged tears in the deck-armor, and one by a mortar shell of rather an ugly character, a cross-beam of the turret broken, and a few bolts driven out of the pilot-house. Not another iron-clad was struck. No one on our side was either killed or wounded. When darkness came on the mortar schooners took up position and opened fire. It was a beautiful sight; the mortar would roar and belch forth a crown of flame, and the shell could be seen rising high and higher till almost out of sight, then to fall and burst in the fortifications. All night they kept up the bombardment, and even up to breakfast-time the next morning. With what effect, however, we could not ascertain, as we fought the battery no more the day following on account of wind and tide, and ere night received orders to return to Port Royal immediately.

Among the incidents of our battle with Fort M^cAllister was one worth recording. A young man who had charge of the largest gun on the enemy's battery, seemed, after an hour or so hard fighting, to conclude that a shot might be got into our port-holes, and he was observed to lean over his gun careless of the incessant fire from the vessels and watch our turret. He seemed to be guided by the variation of light and shade only, for the whole ship was painted a sombre black. Just so soon then as our ports presented and our guns were being sighted, he would bend in the coolest manner, take deliberate aim and fire. The consequences of this coolness were afterward shown by five or six shot in a direct line of the ports, one only three inches below the opening.

The voyage back to Port Royal was quick and pleasant, and upon arriving there the Catskill, an iron-clad also of the Monitor pattern, was found to have arrived. Our anchorage was again near the machine-shop, and various repairs were immediately commenced, as well as additions to strength.

It was supposed one or two weeks at most would suffice to finish the work, but so utterly devoid of energy were the workmen employed, that hardly any perceptible advance could be seen from day to day. They would come at 9 A.M. and go away at three, leaving off one hour from twelve to one for dinner. It is a fact that I never saw more than two working at a time, the rest looking on or gaping around decks, and one man I actually found asleep at only ten in the morning, and this while we were anxiously waited for by the Government in the great attack upon Charleston. The men, however, only received three dollars and a half per day, besides their food, and could not be expected to hurry! The whole harbor was filled with ships of every kind—gun-boats, transports, schooners, and men-of-war, all preparing in some way for the approaching battle. One after the other the iron-clads left the harbor each in tow of some large steamer, and we were left with the Montauk, which was at the time also undergoing repair. The annoyance of delay could not, of course, last forever, and eighteen days from the date of anchoring we started again, now for the final rendezvous at North Edisto, twelve miles from Charleston. Months of expectation and preparation had not failed to rouse the anxiety and



THE COOL GUNNER.

impatience of every one, and all were eager to hasten the attack and decide our fate. Daily reports from every quarter of the perfect defenses, the impassable obstructions, the mon-



WORKMEN AT PORT ROYAL.

strous torpedoes, and the desperation of the enemy, were only additional fuel to the fire; so that it was without regret we started on our mission. The general outline of that memorable engagement is, perhaps, familiar to every one; yet an account of it, as those on the ironclads saw it, may not be uninteresting.

Certain inventions called "devils," for blowing up obstructions, being merely triangular rafts with torpedoes suspended underneath and designed to be pushed ahead of the ships, were towed up by the steamer "Eriesson." These affairs were christened "boot-jacks" from their peculiar shape, yet only one captain was found willing to risk his vessel by having such a dangerous instrument attached. It was, therefore, arranged that he should take the lead, not only to avoid getting entangled with the rest (for the infernal machine exploded by percussion), but to clear up any sunken obstructions that might be in the way. Life-rafts, capable of holding a ship's crew, had been provided for every ironclad, and after arriving at North Edisto they were rigged and tried. Imagine four enormous life-preservers, eighteen or twenty feet long by four in diameter, lashed firmly to each other, with two or three boards as seats and for attachment of mast and row-locks thrown across, the whole affair inflated by bellows, and you may realize some idea of the character of one of them. They sailed remarkably well.

A day or two was consumed in a few final arrangements at North Edisto, and on Sunday, the 5th of April, the iron-clad fleet steamed away for Charleston—nine all told, seven Monitors, the Ironsides, and the Keokuk. Imme-

diately upon arriving off the bar the latter vessel, drawing only seven or eight feet of water, went in to sound out a channel, and lay buoys for the rest. Not a gun was fired at her, the enemy not seeming interested in the subject, or else willing to give that small advantage. Several hours were thus occupied, and rough weather coming on, the bar was not crossed until the following morning. In every direction there seemed to be nothing but batteries and guns, while Fort Sumter's walls were crowded with pieces of every description.

The moment had come. Every one looked anxiously toward the Ironsides, on which the Admiral had taken quarters, for the signal to start. Thirty guns against four hundred! How hopeless seemed the task! No wooden gunboats or men-of-war crossed the bar, and no mortar-schooners took up position to shell the batteries. The former would soon have been riddled with shot; the latter rendered inefficient by the roughness of the sea, even inside the bar. The iron ships were alone to undertake the work. They were each and all thoroughly smeared with grease to glance shot, and their smoke-stacks painted of various colors, as distinguishing marks. Shortly after noon, April 7, 1863, the signal was raised, and the battle so long anticipated was to begin.

No one looking from *this* side the battle can realize the feelings of the participants just on its eve. Slowly we steamed along in single file, and gradually there settled down a solemn hush almost death-like. The moments seemed lengthened to hours; and not a sound save the plash of the propeller broke the terrible silence.



Passed one battery after another, and not a gun was fired. A torpedo blowing the ship into the air would almost have been welcomed, when suddenly, like the crash of thunder, every battery opened, and for a few long moments the roar of guns, the hiss and scream of shells, the quivering of the ship, and the tremendous explosions from our own heavy pieces, drowned the loud voices of command and the painful feelings of suspense alike. Our first shot was at Moultrie, and then undivided attention was given to the northeast angle of Sumter, within 500 yards of which we already were. In a very few moments not a thing could be seen for the smoke, and both sides slackened their fire, only to recommence with redoubled fury.

Piles could be seen driven across the channel from Sumter to the end of Sullivan's Island; and in front of them a row of barrels, sustaining probably some sort of infernal machines, only a few hundred yards ahead; and farther in a triple row (behind which were the rebel rams), running from Fort Johnson to Mount Pleasant. The preceding diagram, drawn by our pilot, a Charleston man, may perhaps better explain the condition of the harbor than any description. In less than half an hour, so furious was the fire, our turret was temporarily disabled, the top of the pilot-house blown off, the 11-inch gun disabled, smoke-stack riddled, boat smashed, and various other lighter injuries inflicted. Signal was made to that effect, and it happening that four others made the same at the time, the whole fleet was ordered to retire. The effect of even what was believed a tempo-

rary retirement on the crews was most damaging, so thoroughly resigned had every one become to the belief that the forts must be taken or the ships sunk. There was, however, no help for what necessity required; and out again from under fire we all steamed to anchorage, opposite Cummings's Point Battery.

The Ironsides had grounded for a time off Cummings's Point, the Keokuk had been pierced in several places, the Nahant was injured in much the same way as the Passaic, and the whole fleet somewhat seriously battered. Not one of the Monitors, however, was permanently disabled. The Keokuk, about whose sinking no fears were then entertained, anchored near the channel by which we had entered. All the others lay still within range, although the enemy kept silence. The damage to Fort Sumter could be plainly seen, and numerous immense holes showed the power of 15-inch shell. By the morning the rebels were at work mounting new guns, and throwing up a new parapet of sand-bags on the northern wall of the fort.

Damages to the fleet were soon repaired, sufficiently to renew engagement. But that day passed, and the next, and next, yet no movement was again made. Murmurs, dissatisfaction, and hard names were frequently heard among the officers and crew, who naturally could not and would not see any reason for not going in again. For five days we lay thus, our discomfort growing almost unbearable. The turret was necessarily kept raised for action, and the sea constantly breaking over the decks, a constant stream of water was poured under-



WORK-SHOP AT PORT ROYAL.

neath it upon the blower belts, thus almost stopping the blowers and our supply of air, added to this, the hatches were necessarily kept down, and the tracking of grease down below, the darkness, the intensely foul air from the congregation of eighty men into so narrow a space, and the rolling of the ship, could not fail to enervate and sicken the healthiest crew.

The Keokuk sank the day following the battle, although at low tide the tops of her turrets could be seen. She was so nearly inshore that the enemy erected a battery to prevent our raising her. Attempts were made to blow her up without success, the devils being considered too dangerous to employ for the purpose. She was left to bury herself in the sand, or be destroyed by time, and her iron-clad companions in the

battle started for Port Royal. Before starting, however, the Nantucket accidentally took fire; but though some alarm was created, no serious damage resulted, beyond the burning of a few stores and bulk-heads below.

Thus ended, in this attack so briefly described, the incidents of the cruise; for after returning to Port Royal (though the ship was supposed to be destined for the Mississippi) orders were received ere long to proceed to New York. The voyage, so tedious when outward-bound, was fair and pleasant, and consumed only a few days.

As I close this record orders are received directing the Passaic to proceed again to the South, to take part in the renewed attack which is now being made upon Charleston, and in four-and-twenty hours we shall be on our way.

ABIDE IN FAITH.

O PORTALS of the Future, open unto me;
Unveil your hidden mysteries to my sight;
Let me with prophet eyes behold the dim To Be,
And read the signs of coming times aright.

Roll back your shrouding folds and let me enter in;
With flashing visions light those aisles of gloom,
Until from thence I rend the secret that shalt win
A nation's triumph or a nation's doom.

O let mine eyes prophetic read the scroll of fate,
Thou sacred guardian of the things to be:
Here at thy portals I, with feet impatient, wait;
Their mystic bolts and bars unlock to me.

For I would reach beyond the knowledge of to-day,
Would stand with thee upon the heights afar,
And forward glancing o'er the dark, uncertain way,
See where shall end the flaming trail of war.

And more: I fain would know if Freedom's flag unfurled
Answers triumphant every scorn and sneer
Flung on it from that haughty, proud Old World
Who thought to see it lying on her bier;

If holy benedictions rest their healing spell
Upon the land so late in travail sore;
If millions have exultant heard the knell
Proclaiming error's long dominion o'er.

O grim, relentless keeper of the things to be!
No welcome hast thou, and I plead in vain;
Thy black and frowning gates look coldly down on me.
I turn with restless heart and cry of pain.

But, hark! a voice:—serene and clear it speaks to me.
"O heart rebellious, let thy murmurings cease;
Know that within the shadow of the great To Be
Thy land lies smiling 'neath its crown of peace.

"In patience wait. Ye may not know the day or hour,
Whether it draweth near or yet is far.
Abide in this: beyond where storm-clouds lower
There rises, ne'er to set, fair Freedom's star."



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